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ABSTRACT

This final report describes activities and accomplishments of Idaho's 3-year program to enhance the quality of educational and community-based services for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with deaf-blindness. The project provided technical assistance to service providers including public and private agencies, institutions, and organizations who provide education, transition, vocational, early identification; and related services to children and youth who have deaf-blindness. It also provided support and training to families of children with deaf-blindness. Primary services provided by the project were early identification of infants, children, and youth with deaf-blindness or who were at risk of being deaf-blind, technical assistance to families of children in Idaho who are deaf-blind, development of a parent-to-parent support list, development of a local, state, and national resource directory for families, development and maintenance of in-state expertise, consultation and technical assistance to service providers throughout the state, and development of an advisory board to represent the interests of all children in Idaho who are deaf-blind. Ongoing coordination and interagency collaboration occurred with public, private, local, and national resources. This report describes the project's conceptual framework and justification, goals and objectives, activities and accomplishments, problems, evaluation, and impact. (CR)

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GRANT PERFORMANCE REPORT

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I. Executive Summary

The purpose of the Idaho Project for Children and Youth with Deaf-Blindness is to enhance the quality of educational and community-based services for infants, toddlers, children, and youth in Idaho who are deaf-blind. The project provides training, technical assistance, and resources to families, educators, agency personnel, and individuals who are deaf-blind. There are currently 63 individuals registered on the Idaho deaf-blind census.

A coordinated process is ongoing in an effort to identify individuals, birth though 21 years of age, who have both a vision and hearing loss. The Idaho Project's Transdisciplinary Team is used to assist families, educators, and other service providers in providing quality programming and transition planning for individuals who are deaf-blind throughout Idaho.

Project activities include professional/family inservice trainings, spring and summer workshops, fact sheets, a quarterly newsletter, a web site, and a video and materials lending library.

II. Project Goals

Goal A: To identify children in Idaho, birth through 21 year of age, who are deaf-blind, or are at risk of being deaf-blind (307.11 (a)(1)(I)

Goal B: To deliver technical assistance to families of children in Idaho who are deaf-blind.

Goal C: Deliver technical assistance to service providers including public and private agencies, institutions, and organizations who provide educational, transitional, vocational, early identification, and related services to children and youth in Idaho who are deaf-blind.

Goal D: Create a process to gain community oversight, coordination, and collaboration among consumers, families, and service providers on the local, state, and national level.

III. Context

The Idaho Project for Children and Youth with Deaf-Blindness is one of the projects under the umbrella of the University of Idaho's University Affiliated Program (UAP). Until 1989 the project was part of Washington project and there were very few services and only 13 children on the project census. The project has grown considerably since that time with the assistance of a full time director/coordinator. At the same time the project is limited is what it can do given that there is only one staff person.

Idaho is a large state. It covers a land area of 82,635 square miles and encompasses seven natural geographic regions ranging from the high altitude desert found in the southern part of the

state on the Snake River plain, to the Rocky Mountains in the central and northern part of the state. 60% of the state is considered wilderness.

The population of Idaho currently stands at 1,222,000 and derives most of its income from agriculture. The state has grown 22 percent in the past decade making it the third fastest growing state in the country. Seventy-seven percent of all Idahoans live in small towns of less than ten thousand people making it one of the most rural states in the country.

IV. How Goals Were Accomplished

The following sections lists the project's goals, objectives and activities. Each activity is described and to how it was accomplished.

Goal A: To identify children in Idaho, birth through 21 years of age, who are deaf-blind, or are at risk of being deaf-blind (307-.11 (a)(1)(I)

Objective 1: Continue to expand procedures for publicizing the project to private and public agencies and organizations throughout Idaho in an effort to identify children who are deaf-blind or are at risk of being deaf-blind.

Activities:

a. Review previously developed project brochures regarding definition of deaf-blindness, causes and symptoms of deaf-blindness, description of project services, resources, readability and language.

The brochure is reviewed yearly by family members and service providers for clarity in regards to the definition of deaf-blindness causes and symptoms associated with deaf-blindness, description of the project services, resources, readability and language used in the brochure.

b. Distribute project letter/brochure to service providers throughout the state including hospitals, audiologists, speech and language pathologists, pediatricians, family organizations, and private organizations (i.e. Indian Health Services, Idaho Migrant Council, March of Dimes, United Cerebral Palsy, WIC, Healthy Families Program, and the Idaho Rural Development Council's Affiliated

Workgroups), the Idaho Perinatal Project, and the Idaho Infant Toddler Coordinating Council.

The process of identifying children in Idaho who are deaf-blind is ongoing. Information, including letters and brochures are sent to

the above mentioned organizations on a yearly basis. These organizations are also included on the project's newsletter list which now stands at over 700. Information is also distributed at the annual CEC conference, the Idaho Parent's Unlimited Annual Conference as well as various workshops the project sponsors or is a part of during the course of the year. The project is continually refining and updating the list of sources.

c. Distribute project letter/brochure to public, private, and parochial schools in Idaho, including reservation schools.

Each fall the project contacts public, private, parochial, and reservation schools to give them information about the project census and project activities. Many of these schools also receive information during the year about the project activities.

d. Distribute project letter/brochure to state Adult/Child Development Centers, Head Start projects, including migrant councils and reservations, public and private pre-schools, and daycare programs.

Each fall the project contacts the Adult/Child Development Centers throughout the state as well as Head Start Project, including migrant council and reservation pre-schools and daycare programs. The project continues to work with staff from Maternal and Child Health programs to provide culturally sensitive trainings for families of children who are at rick of becoming deaf-bind.

e. Develop and produce radio, television, and newspaper public service announcements in English and Spanish describing the causes and symptoms of deaf-blindness and how consumers can access the project.

The project has developed radio and television public service announcement in both English and Spanish. These announcements have played on 31 radio stations throughout Idaho. They to play on a quarterly basis throughout the state.

f. Develop the Idaho Project computer bulletin board to act as a monthly resource for families, teachers, and other service providers throughout Idaho and neighboring states.

The Idaho Project is included as part of the Center on Disabilities and

Human Development homepage. Information about the web site is distributed through a variety of sources including the project's newsletter, memos to families and teachers of children on the census, trainings, and media announcements. Information is updated on a monthly basis.

g. Present and/or distribute information on deaf-blindness at local regional, and state-wide parent and professional conferences.

The project has been a part of the annual Idaho Parent's Unlimited State Conference for the past six years. The project is has also been a part of the Governor's Annual Disability Awareness Week activities. Additionally, presentations about deaf-blindness have been presented at the annual Idaho Council on Exceptional Children conference, the annual TASH conference, and the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Consortium.

h. Send project newsletter on a quarterly basis to individuals and organizations listed in previous activities.

Fall and winter newsletter have been mailed to over 800 individuals and the spring edition has been mailed in April. The school newsletter has been mailed in early September.

I. Develop project advertising (e.g. audiotapes, brochures, materials, bulletin board announcements, screening information) in Spanish for distribution.

The project has developed Spanish public service announcements and fact sheets. The project brochure is also printed in Spanish. The project library has a number of videos, manuals and books in Spanish. The project advertises that materials are available in Spanish.

Objective 2: Coordinate project activities with other state child find efforts

Activities:

a. Disseminate information and coordinate with State Education Agency regarding the December 1, Part B, child count.

The Idaho Project attempts to coordinate with the Idaho State Department of Education regarding the December 1, Part B, child count. Several issues continue to impact the perfect coordination of the project count and the state Part B count. First, the definition of "deaf-blindness" used by the state of Idaho is different from the definition used by the federal government. The project uses the federal definition. The term "severe disabilities" is not included in the Idaho definition and therefore there are many children who are labeled as "multi-handicapped" under the Part B count. The Idaho Department of Education is in the process of changing their definition to match the federal definition. The State Department of Education is well aware of the discrepancy between their reported numbers and the numbers reported by the Idaho Project and is very interested in resolving this issue. A meeting between the Idaho Project and the State Department of Education will take place this spring to coordinate efforts for the December 1 count.

b. Disseminate information and coordinate with the December 1, Part H, child count.

The Idaho Project also tries to coordinate with the December 1, Part H, child count. Again, issues surround the definition. The Part H child count currently codes only "deaf," "blind," or "other." The project is currently working with the Part H project to add a "deaf-blind" code to their system.

Objective 3: Maintain a standard referral process to the Idaho Project for Children and Youth with Deaf-Blindness.

Activities:

a. Solicit referrals through activities referred to in Objective 1.

This activity is ongoing.

b. Mail project intake form and technical assistance forms to families and service providers of the referred child.

This procedure is completed each time a referral is made to the project.

c. Add child to project census if vision and hearing information meets

project criteria.

Children are added to the project after documented information about their vision and hearing has been collected by the project.

d. Add child's family and service providers to project mailing list.

An information packet about the project is always sent to a new child's family and teacher. The packet includes the project brochure, and introductory letter explaining the services the project can provide, fact sheets, a library catalogue, and additional informational that may apply to the particular child.

Objective 4: Validate eligibility of children for placement on the Idaho deaf-blind census

Activities:

a. Review information on project intake forms

This activity is ongoing.

b. Review child's medical records regarding vision and hearing as requested by family or service providers

A review of the child's medical records is made as a part of each technical assistance visit. Information regarding vision and hearing is collected at the time the child becomes part of the project as validated by the teacher.

c. Conduct interview with the family and/or service provider regarding child's vision and hearing.

An intake interview regarding the child's vision and hearing is conducted with the family and/or service provider (teacher) of each child before they are officially a part of the project.

d. Access the project's transdisciplinary team or other consultants to assist with validation and technical assistance requests of family and/or service providers.

The project's transdisciplinary team or other consultants are available to assist families and service providers in making decisions

regarding a child's eligibility for project services.

Objective 5: Complete project census in a timely manner

Activities:

a. Update census information for all children on the Idaho Project census annually.

The project updates the database in the fall of each year.

b. Complete census report and mail to NTAC project annually.

The census report is currently being completed and will be mailed to NTAC before the first of May. The current count stands a 63.

Goal B: To deliver technical assistance to families of children in Idaho who are deaf-blind.

Objective 1: Maintain a process for families to access services and resources from the project in a coordinated, timely, and family-centered manner.

Activities:

a. Implement methods for publicizing project to families as specified in Goal A, Objective 1 (Page 1)

The project is publicized to families by getting information out about the project services at conferences parents attend, articles in various newsletters, radio announcements, through teachers, doctors, and organizations who serve children with disabilities.

b. Maintain methods for families to obtain technical assistance through verbal and written request

Families are sent a parent request form in September and in January. They can request assistance by completing the parent request form, by calling the project office or e-mailing the project.

c. Clarify request through written or verbal contact with the family and provide technical assistance in a timely manner.

Following each verbal or written request for technical assistance a family and/or teacher is sent a form asking them to describe in more detail the topics they would like addressed and the kind of technical assistance that would be most helpful to them.

d. Maintain a system to track technical assistance requests and responses

The project maintains the written requests and responses as well as a computer project log of all technical assistance requests.

e. Analyze types and number of technical assistance requests from families as a way to revise, identify gaps, and /or add services provided by the project.

Requests from families have included issues regarding developing communication systems for their child, collaborative teaming, and designing curriculum adaptations.

Objective 2: Offer a comprehensive array of services in a coordinated, timely, and family-centered manner.

Activities:

a. Complete a needs assessment process to meet technical assistance requests that is family-centered, culturally sensitive and responsive

The project has distributed a needs survey to parents of individuals on the project census. The areas of communication, behavioral issues, transition, and sensory integration issues have been priority areas.

c. Provide training for families that is responsive to their technical assistance requests.

Each year the project takes a survey of parent training needs. Each year the area of "communication" is a major topic. The workshops chosen were looking at the area of communication from several different perspectives - regulation of nervous systems and health.

.The project's 1998 annual summer institute was entitle "How Does Your Engine Run?" The Alert Program for Self Regulation. 85

teachers, parents, and support personnel attended the workshop. The workshop took place at the University of Idaho in Boise.

In June of 1999 Donna Lehr presented in Idaho Falls and Boise on "Children with Special Health Care Needs." Over one hundred teachers, parents, and support personnel attend the workshops.

On March 12, 1998 Emily Curtis from New Hats, Inc. presented a training entitled "Revisiting Person Centered Planning" in Pocatello. This training was for families, adult service providers and secondary school personnel who are involved with transition. Ms. Curtis presented the same workshop on March 13 in Boise. The training was co-sponsored by the Idaho Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.

d. Provide support and technical assistance to families to facilitate family/professional partnerships

The project has provided formal training regarding parent-professional partnerships. The project always involved families in technical assistance visits to schools and promotes bringing families and school personnel to work together. The project is committed to the concept of teaming and including parents and other family members as full members of those teams.

This area of teaming and collaboration needs to be annual training. The project is currently planning an early September training in the area of collaboration between families and school personnel. Again, the training will take place in several locations in the state.

Objective 3: Develop and maintain a process to support families in accessing the necessary resources, support services, and agencies

a. Provide support to families regardless of race, socioeconomic status, and geographical area

The project encourages and supports all families regardless of race, socioeconomic status, and geographical area. Information about the project services goes to individuals and family organizations that reach families throughout Idaho. This is an ongoing process. We are always trying to expand this process.

b. Develop a parent to parent support network via community meetings, regional workshops, computer networks, mailings, and telephone trees

Parents and children on the census are located all over the state of Idaho. Trying to create a parent to parent network via community meetings has not been effective nor has a computer network. Many of these families live in very isolated areas and do not have access to a computer. The project has created a Parent to Parent Support list. The purpose of the list is to act as a resource for families who have children and young adults on the census. Families are asked if they want to be on the list and act as a resource for other families. Family members indicate what kinds of topics they would be interested in talking about with other families (i.e. transition, teaming ideas, adaptations, coping strategies, medical issues, educational programs, etc.) The list will be updated yearly. Families can be added or deleted to the list depending upon their preference.

c. Develop and distribute a local, state, and national resource directory for families

The resource guide was completed with the assistance of Hilton-Perkins. The guide has been designed in a 3 ring notebook so parents can add updated information. The guide is divided into the following sections: Idaho Regions; Birth to Age 2; Ages 3 to 21; Ages 14 to 21; State Organizations; National Organizations; Recreation Idaho; Recreation National; Internet; IDEA 97, and Notes. Families are sent additional information to add to the notebook throughout the year.

d. Provide support to interested families to attend the "Families Together" weekend in collaboration with the State of Washington and the Families Together organization

Each family of a child on the census was contacted regarding this weekend. In September 1998 one family attended the event. This is a problematic time of year of most families. In September 1999 no families responded to the invitation.

e. Provide support, training, and technical assistance to families in planning for transition across the age range (e.g. Part H to Part B, grade to grade, and Part B to the adult service system)

This activity is ongoing.

f. Maintain and expand the project resource library to include user-friendly videos, manual and materials that families can access on a regular basis; connect families with other resource libraries and projects such as the UAP Assistive Technology Project

This is an ongoing activity. The project continues to collect videos that cover a range of topics that both families and service providers are interested in.

g. Distribute the quarterly project newsletter to families with information and resources

Each family of a child on the census receives the quarterly newsletter.

Objective 4: Develop a process to monitor, evaluate, and refine family services that includes consumer participation

Actvitities:

a. Develop an evaluation system for family services that collects both quantitative and qualitative data

This activity is ongoing. It is the policy of the project to send evaluation forms to families as well as service providers who have received technical assistance from the project. Project activities are rated as to their effectiveness and timeliness. The project is also always in either face to face contact or telephone contact with a family as it is offering technical assistance to a child. This is also an ongoing process in order to make sure the project is meeting the needs of the family and child.

b. Use evaluation results and information to determine project's responsiveness to family needs and to make revisions and/or additions to the technical assistance provided families by the project.

The project is constantly using the results of visits with families to refine and revise the project's services.

Objective 5: Develop a process for educating the community and educational systems to with families in a collaborative and person-centered manner

Activities:

a. Conduct trainings for and with families on person and family centered planning approaches

This activity is ongoing. Trainings continue to be personalized and take place in a informal manner with each family that receives technical assistance from the project.

b. Conduct trainings, using families as trainers, for educators, adult service providers, and community members on person and family centered planning approaches

There were no trainings in 1998 in which families were used as trainers. There were planning meetings on person centered approaches and families were major participants.

Goal C: Deliver technical assistance to service providers including public and private agencies, institutions, and organizations who provide educational, transitional, vocational, early identification, and related services to children and youth in Idaho who are deaf-blind.

Objective 1: Implement a process to access technical assistance services and resources (including the project's Transdisciplinary Team) in a coordinated and user-friendly manner

Activities:

a. Implement procedures for publicizing the project as previously described in Goal A, Objective 1 (Page 1)

The project is publicized through the project newsletters, web site, project brochure, conference presentations, attendance at various meetings, and trainings sponsored by the project

b. Implement a process for technical assistance to be requested, documented, and responded to in a timely manner

Teachers and other service providers have access to the project's regular mail address, e-mail address, web site, and telephone number through the newsletter, brochure, project director's cards, and trainings. If a teacher makes a request the kind of assistance requested is documented and clarified in written and verbal form via

telephone. Plans are then made for a technical assistance visit from the project director, project team, or other appropriate consultants.

Objective 2: Implement a process to deliver technical assistance in a coordinated, user-friendly manner

a. Implement a written and verbal assessment process that clarifies technical assistance request

Teachers or other service providers are asked to clarify their need through a series of written questions. Follow-up is done by the project through an on site or telephone interview with the teacher or service provider.There have been 12 requests for technical assistance from teachers or other service providers since October 1, 1998.

b. Implement a technical assistance process that includes a written action plan, describing the agreement of assistance to be provided, child/family centered strategies, timelines, project and participant responsibilities, resources needed and used and strategies for follow-up and evaluation.

This process is ongoing.

c. Provide technical assistance in a variety of formats including small and large group in-service trainings, use of the Idaho Project Transdisciplinary Team, distance learning strategies (e.g. project home page), summer trainings, on-site technical assistance visits, telephone conference calls, information and resource sharing through the project library.

Since October 1, 1998 the project has received 12 technical assistance requests by teachers or other service providers of children on the project census. All of the technical assistance visits have involved some or all of the members of the project's team. Again, this is an ongoing process. None of these requests have been one time visits but have required follow up in various forms - on-site repeat visits, conference calls, information mailed.

It is the policy of the project, including the team, to always generate a report that is user friendly. Over the years these reports have

taken on the personality of the teacher, the school setting, and the child. Each one has been different depending on the training of the teacher and the request that has been made by the teacher or the family.

Objective 3: Develop and implement a process to incorporate follow-up procedures into all technical assistance requests

Activities:

a. Develop a written action plan which includes follow-up procedures, timelines, and is responsive to participant's request

As stated in Objective 2, Activity b, there is always a follow-up plan developed with the teacher or other service provider.

b. Develop follow-up procedures that are personalized, culturally sensitive, and delivered in variety of formats to service providers (e.g. telephone conferences in the evening, audiotapes and videos in Spanish, home visits versus school visits)

Follow-up procedures for technical assistance is ongoing. They are always personalized and delivered in a manner that will be most beneficial to the service provider. As stated previously, long distance follow up is typically done by telephone on a regular basis or additional visits are scheduled by one of the team members. Teachers of children on the census are all on the project mailing list an are given priority access to project activities and use of the lending library.

Objective 4: Implement a process to develop and maintain in-state expertise

Activities:

a. Develop the expertise of the project's Transdisciplinary Team through ongoing training and information sharing

Over the past several years all of the team members have received specific training in the area of deaf-blindness from the NTAC project, Helen Keller, and other projects.. The project tries to update team members skills on an annual basis. The team meets several times a year for a team member training and sharing session.

b. Develop in-state expertise through a system of personnel development (e.g. summer institutes, local in-service, pre-service trainings)

Developing in-state expertise takes place on several levels. First, the annual summer institute is one way of developing the skills of teachers and other service providers. It has been the policy of the project to sponsor a training in various parts of the state each summer. The project has developed quite a reputation for bringing in quality presenters.

As stated previously the 1998 summer training was entitled, "How Does Your Engine Run?" It was presented in Boise and the University of Idaho and attended by eighty five teachers, parents, and support personnel. The 1999 summer institute was entitled, "Children with Special Health Care Needs," and was presented in Idaho Falls and Boise. It was attended by over one hundred teachers, parents, and support personnel.

Training also takes form as part of the project technical assistance. The transdisciplinary team that is a part of the project is always trying to figure out additional methods of training school staff and families. Our connection with people is not designed to be a one time encounter. We try to continue giving people skills and information through our user friendly designed reports, additional visits, modeling teaching techniques, phone calls, videos taping, and transfer of resources.

c. Identify and form collaborative relationships with external resources who are able to provide assistance in such areas as financial, information, and consultants (e.g. NTAC, Hilton-Perkins)

The collaborative relationship between external resources such as NTAC is ongoing. NTAC provides technical assistance and training on a number of levels to the project. NTAC, HKNC, and the Idaho Project are currently working with the Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, The Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind, and the Idaho Department of Vocational Rehabilitation to create a two year plan for training and technical assistance for individuals who are of transition age.

A collaborative training on deaf-blindness took place in March 1999 between the project, NTAC, Helen Keller, and the Idaho

Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. The training was presented the adult service providers in Moscow, Boise, and Pocatello. 82 service providers from across the state attended the training. A follow-up training is planned for the spring of 2000.

Objective 5: Develop a process to monitor, evaluate, and refine the technical assistance delivered to service providers

Activities:

a. Design an evaluation process that is outcome driven and focuses on the child/family (and service provider) as recipient's of technical assistance.

The evaluation process is really just that, a process, when it comes to technical assistance. When the project is asked to assist we are in contact with a teacher or family on an ongoing basis over the course of , at least, the school year. There are ongoing telephone contacts, face to face meetings, which are part of the evaluation process. At the end of each year a more formal survey is conducted that asks teachers and parents who have received t.a. from the project to rate their satisfaction and comment on the process.

b. Collect formative evaluation data during technical assistance visits to refine technical assistance services and design follow-up plans

When a technical assistance request is made by a parent or a teacher it is the policy of the project to spend at least a full day observing the child. Oftentimes the team will spend two days observing, giving training to parents and professional staff, and developing an action plan. That time in the classroom, or whatever environment the child is in, is invaluable in that it provides information about the child in a variety of activities. That process is used as a foundation to design followup plans.

c. Collect summative evaluation data to evaluate effectiveness of technical assistance providers, methods, products, and materials and modify future technical assistance services.

As stated about in Objective 5, Activity a, the project collects more summative data at the end of the school year. Data is summarized to evaluate the effectiveness of the past year's technical assistance.

Comments are evaluated and used to refine and improve the project's technical assistance system of delivery. Providing quality technical assistance to service providers and families who live hundreds of miles away continues to be an issue. Little by little, through summer workshops which are provided to professionals and parent in various parts of the state, people are building their skills. The biggest problem still remains the tremendous turnover of special education staff in this state. Classroom personnel for children who are deaf-blind does not always remain stable from year to year. So, it is one of the tasks of a project such as this to help problem solve that issue with families and design strategies that will create some stability in the child and family's life. One such strategy has been the "transition notebook" that the project has developed and encouraged families to use. The transition notebook includes different sections that describes, in layman's terms, the important things people need to know about a particular child. Sections might include - personal (medical issues, information about the child's vision and hearing, emergency procedures), a communication section (gesture/sign dictionary, receptive and expressive language), educational (MAPS, IAP, classroom participation plans), logic section (describes why different decisions have been made - so new staff doesn't reinvent the wheel or try things that don't work), data section, and team note section.

This kind of a stability building strategy has worked well. Paired with quarterly video taping and samples of a child's work, a portfolio is created that can be used and updated by staff.

d. Implement a process for disseminating evaluation results to technical assistance providers and participants.

Evaluation results are shared with all technical assistance providers The project's transdisciplinary team meets in the summer to review the past year's technical assistance requests and the process used by the team. At that time the team discusses how to improve and refine the process they use and plan for the coming year.

Objective 1: Implement a process to gain community oversight through a project Advisory Board

Activities:

a. Develop advisory board membership to represent the interests of all children in Idaho who are deaf-blind

The current advisory board is made up of the following members: 2 parent representatives, a representative of special education from the Idaho State Department of Education, the director for the Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind, the director of the outreach program for the Idaho Migrant Council, a teacher, a representative of NTSC, the director of the University of Idaho's UP, a representative from the Idaho Commission for the Blind, a representative from the Part H, Infant-Toddler Program for Idaho, the director of the Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities, and a member of the college of education, special education faculty from the University of Idaho in Moscow, a representative from vocational rehabilitation, and a representative from the Bureau of Indian Affairs field education office.

b. Develop advisory board membership to include family members, deaf-blind consumers, representative of the Idaho Migrant Council, representatives of the Native American tribes, representatives of national, state, local agencies, groups, and organizations.

Please see Activity a.

c. Hold advisory board meetings in the fall followed by quarterly memos and winter and spring conference calls where input is solicited and recommendations are followed by the project director.

The advisory board meets face to face on an annual basis in the fall. Board members have access to the project throughout the year. They are updated as to project activities through a quarterly memo with an option for a board conference call as needed.

Objective 2: Implement a process to solicit and support input from individuals who are deaf-blind and their families

Activities:

a. Solicit input as to project activities from a range (e.g. age, school and living environments, and culture) of individuals who are deaf-blind and their families (e.g. needs assessment, evaluation process)

The project solicits input as to project activities from individuals who are deaf-blind and their families via the annual survey, technical assistance visits, telephone calls, and family visits.

b. Solicit and support individuals who are deaf-blind and their families to participate on the advisory board

Two family members are participants on the advisory board. The board still does not have an individual who is deaf-blind to participate on the board but is gaining assistance from the Commission on the Blind to help find a board member.

c. Solicit and support individuals who are deaf-blind and their families to participate in the design of project activities (e.g. conferences, summer institutes, family weekend activities)

An annual telephone survey is conducted with all families of children on the census. Family members are asked questions about the content of upcoming project activities. Discussion during technical assistance visits is also a way to parents and other family members to give project ideas about future trains and activities.

d. Design a process for individuals who are deaf-blind and their families to identify their needs.

The process of an annual survey continues to serve this process. We also conduct spring and fall telephone calls with families and ask questions during technical assistance visits.

e. Provide accommodations for consumers who are deaf-blind so they have input and can participate in project activities (e.g. interpreters, materials printed in braille, large print, visual contrast, translation into Spanish, flexible meeting times)

This activity is an ongoing service of the project.

Objective 3: Coordinate Idaho Project activities with the other local, state, regional, and national agencies and organizations

Activities:

a. Coordinate and collaborate with the Idaho State Department of Education in child find, training, and personnel development activities

This is also an ongoing process. Personnel at the Idaho State Department of Education know the project's schedule of activities. A representative of the department is on the project's advisory board.

b. Coordinate and collaborate with the Part H lead agency, the Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Developmental Disabilities in child find and training activities

The project is coordinating and collaborating with the Department of Health and Welfare's, Infant Toddler Program which is the Part H lead agency in several different ways. First, the project makes presentations about the project to the regional managers of the Infant Toddler Program. Each of these people is on the project mailing list and gets information through the newsletter and project mailings. The project also has collaborated with the Infant Toddler program in bringing speakers to Idaho. This collaborative relationship is ongoing and will continue in the future.

The Idaho Project and the Infant Toddler Program continue to collaborate with several other agencies and organizations including Idaho State University, Department of Speech and Audiology, the Idaho Council for the Hard of Hearing, St. Luke's Regional Hospital, the Peri-natal Project, the Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind, and several private consultants to pilot universal newborn hearing screening programs in hospitals throughout Idaho. As of the past month 8 hospitals throughout Idaho are screening all their newborns for hearing impairments. This effort is ongoing.

c. Coordinate with Idaho Parents Unlimited (IPUL), the state's parent information center, in providing information to parents about the project resources and training opportunities

Information about the project activities is sent to IPUL on a regular basis. This information is often times reprinted in the IPUL newsletter which goes to hundreds of families throughout the state. The project also is in contact with regional representatives for

IPUL to give them information about trains that may be taking place in their part of the state. The project is also always involved at some level (presenting, information booth) at the annual IPUL fall conference.

d. Collaborate with the Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind in child identification activities, statewide Usher's assessment, and training.

This activity is ongoing

e. Collaborate with the State of Washington to participate in a "Families Together" weekend

As stated under Goal B. this has not been a successful activity. In the past several years only one family has responded to the invitation. The weekend is held in September which makes it difficult for families to attend.

f. Collaborate with the adult service system including the Idaho Commission for the Blind, Vocational Rehabilitation, Living Independent Network Corporation, and Easter Seals

The Idaho Project has coordinated with the Commission and Vocational Rehabilitation to provide training throughout Idaho for adult service providers. This training also included staff from NTSC and Helen Keller. The training is ongoing and the next level will take place in the Spring of 2000.

g. Collaborate with national projects to provide ongoing training, technical assistance, and information (NTSC, Perkins)

As stated above the project has provided training to adult service providers in collaboration with NTSC and Helen Keller. Additionally, Hilton Perkins has been very helpful in assisting the project with the production of the project information notebook for families.

h. Coordinate with university teacher trains programs to provide information and training to students on deaf-blindness

Teacher training programs throughout the state receive ongoing information about deaf-blindness and the Idaho Project. The new

web site is intended to be a resource for students in training programs and will be advertised as such a resource. Information regarding trains sponsored by the project are also always given to each of the teacher training institutions in the state.

i. Coordinate and collaborate with the Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities in their strategic planning efforts.

In the past year the project has not been a major part of the Council's planning process. The project is a member of the Consortium for Individual's with Disabilities advocacy group that meets on a monthly basis. Council activities are discussed at the meetings and coordination of activities is arranged as possible.

V. Problems Encountered

There are several areas that continually impact the work of the project. First, there is the ongoing issue of staff turnover; both teachers and paraprofessionals. 70 % of the students on the this year's census have either a new teacher, a new paraprofessional, or both. This constant disruption of programs is unsettling.

The project has tried to figure out different ways of transferring information from year to year so there can be some consistency from teacher to teacher and school to school. We have designed strategies such as a "Transition Notebook" which has different sections (e.g. communication, medications, learning styles, programs, etc.) that can be filled out and given to new teachers, paraprofessionals, supports personnel, and families. Although we think this is a great way to pass on information about a student our experience tells us that teachers don't complete the notebook. Oftentimes, this task is left up to the parents and not all parents are willing or able to complete it. The project encourages and assists teachers and families in completing strategies that will help with transitions and personnel changes.

The project itself is also a way to keep some consistency in a student's program. Again, sometimes new teachers contact the project for support and information and other times they do not access our services even though we have contacted them. Different teachers have different personalities and different approaches to teaching and working with consultants.

Another issue, at least in Idaho, is that of a student who is deaf-blind being placed in a classroom where the teacher and other support personnel, such as speech and language pathologists (SLP), are not trained to work with the student. That training is everything from designing programs to developing useful communication systems. More often than not a student is placed in a "resource room" with a teacher who has a "generalist" degree and has never had any experience or training in teaching and supporting students with more severe disabilities. It is not

unusual, in affect it is the norm, that the paraprofessional is making major educational and instructional decisions. programmatic decisions throughout the day.

The project works to train and problem solve with a student's team in how to get the team more information on working with a particular child, developing a functional communication system and communicating with one another in a more effective manner. Oftentimes a MAPS process will be initiated to try and get the team members including the family to ferret out issues and develop actions plans that can solve problems. Training for team members is ongoing. That may come in the form of onsite training, a summer institute, mailings, items loaned from the library, etc. The project tries to develop on-site expertise in school districts throughout the state.

What are the lessons learned?

This is an important project in Idaho for a number of reasons. First, it has the ability to give hope to families in a system that is oftentimes very bleak. It is not a place of contention but of support and information. It is a place of continuity in a system of inconsistencies.

Secondly, the project brings much needed assistance to teachers and support personnel. It gives them information and training that they can apply to a student who is deaf-blind but also carry over to help other students in their classroom and school. If a teacher and/or a paraprofessional remains with a student the project also becomes a resource of consistency for them.

VI. Implications for policy, practice, research and recommendations for OSEP.

One of the unique things about the project is the longevity of services of children. It is highly unusual for one program to potentially serve an individual from birth until they are 22 years of age. That kind of continuity is critical to well designed programs and services for children and young adults who are deaf-blind.

Again, one of the critical pieces throughout Idaho and other states is the training of personnel. OSEP can play a role in looking to creating incentives and collaborative grants that encourage additional training for teachers and other service providers who may students who are deaf-blind.